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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

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5.1 The overall orientation of the programme is to facilitate better integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres by providing support to the central policy-making bodies and coordination processes on the various aspects of development. The mandate for the programme derives from the Secretariat's responsibility to provide support to the General Assembly, in particular its Second and Third Committees, the Economic and Social Council and relevant subsidiary bodies, relevant resolutions concerning international economic cooperation, resolutions on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, including, in particular, General Assembly resolutions 47/212 A and B, of 23 December 1992 and 6 May 1993 respectively, on the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, as well as from relevant aspects of the mandate of the Secretary-General, including his responsibilities as the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

5.2 The programme is under the responsibility of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

5.3 The work of the Department helps Member States to develop agreed standards, policies and programmes on issues arising from globalization of environmental and social problems and from the marginalization of certain disadvantaged groups. It also deals with certain aspects of democratization such as the advancement of women and the involvement of new global actors, for example, members of civil society, in the policy-making and standard-setting initiatives of the international community.

5.4 By the end of the period covered by the plan, it is expected that the Department would have accomplished the following:

(a) Strengthened the role of the Organization as a forum for debate and consensus-building in the economic and social spheres;

(b) Provided effective support to standing political processes and relevant ad hoc processes for the development of integrated and coordinated policy responses to development issues and to emerging global problems, for the negotiation of global agreements on norms, standards and cooperative actions, and for the enhancement of the effectiveness of operational activities for development;

(c) Promoted and monitored, as appropriate, the implementation of agreed plans, strategies, programmes or platforms for action, including the outcome of United Nations conferences for which the Department has responsibility;

(d) Enhanced policy coherence and coordination both within the United Nations and amongst United Nations system organizations;

(e) Strengthened linkages between the United Nations and civil society and developed innovative means of cooperation and modes of partnership in areas of common interest, including operational activities for development at the country level;

(f) Increased awareness of United Nations work in the economic and social spheres and related fields.

Subprogramme 5.1 Policy coordination and inter-agency cooperation

5.5 The objectives of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs, are:

(a) To develop proposals and provide support to central intergovernmental bodies for the integrated and coordinated policy responses to issues of development and to emerging global problems in the economic and social fields;

(b) To facilitate and promote greater cooperation and collaboration among the organizations of the United Nations system active in the economic and social areas;

(c) To enhance opportunities for dialogue among the different elements of civil society and to increase the Organization's capacity to serve as a focal point for the non-governmental organizations with consultative status with the United Nations and to improve coordination of non-governmental organization activities so as to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity;

(d) To promote and strengthen coherence and reform within the United Nations system in the area of operational activities for development. To that end, the Department will seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness, coherence and coordination of operational activities of the system at the country level, in particular those financed on a grant basis in support of development efforts, and to encourage integration with national efforts through such approaches as a programme approach, national execution and country strategy notes, at the request of the recipient Governments;

(e) To provide efficient and effective technical secretariat services to central intergovernmental bodies and major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related areas through, inter alia, improvement in the planning, forecasting, editing and monitoring of the documentation prepared in those areas.

Subprogramme 5.2 Advancement of women

5.6 The subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division for the Advancement of Women, will seek to achieve effective support for the implementation of actions contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, including through expanded interaction with civil society. To that end, within its mandate as set out in chapter V of the Platform and other intergovernmental decisions, the subprogramme will build on its nodal position within the Organization to promote mainstreaming of gender concerns, reflecting a rights-based approach centred on equality between women and men, and to ensure accountability among all actors responsible for implementing the Platform.

5.7 More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To monitor the extent to which the gender dimension is reflected and acted upon within relevant intergovernmental forums and in policies and programmes of United Nations system organizations; and to analyse and develop as required policy issues of increasing importance or which may be emerging as global trends, as well as to facilitate the debate of intergovernmental bodies, especially the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council;

(b) To improve the monitoring of the extent of women's enjoyment of their human rights and of whether violations of those rights are dealt with by all human rights mechanisms;

(c) To contribute to the development and strengthening of human rights mechanisms, including the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or the increased use of existing mechanisms;

(d) To monitor the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women and to facilitate the intergovernmental monitoring of system-wide implementation of commitments under the Platform for Action;

(e) To design and maintain a system of information with specialized constituencies related to the Platform for Action.

Subprogramme 5.3 Social development

5.8 The subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division for Social Policy and Development, will seek to strengthen international cooperation for social development, with particular attention to the three core issues of poverty eradication, employment-generation and social integration, in the context of the comprehensive and detailed framework of commitments and policies for action by Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations provided by the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

5.9 More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To facilitate intergovernmental dialogue on social issues and trends and their policy implications in support of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The subprogramme will promote common norms, policies and cooperative actions aimed at facilitating the realization in an integrated manner of the Social Summit's objectives, and will develop integrated approaches to issues that cut across the economic, social and cultural domains, with particular emphasis on the contribution to social cohesion of policies to reduce poverty and generate employment. The subprogramme will also contribute to the efforts by the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty, in the context of both the Social Summit's objectives and activities related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006);

(b) To promote the implementation and coordinate the preparation and monitoring of United Nations declarations and programmes of action relevant to social development, such as the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the World Plan of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the International Year of Older Persons in 1999. These activities relate principally to the integration into society of groups who, because of their vulnerability or lack of power, are not participating fully in the life of the community;

(c) To strengthen participation of and cooperation among all actors concerned with social development (Governments at all levels, all elements of civil society and the private sector) in promoting national objectives and internationally agreed norms.

Subprogramme 5.4 Sustainable development

5.10 Taking into account the outcome of the 1997 special session of the General Assembly that will review progress achieved since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the subprogramme will ensure the effective and coordinated implementation of Agenda 21 and other commitments made during the Conference, including the outcomes of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and will increase interaction to that end with actors of civil society.

5.11 More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division for Sustainable Development, are:

(a) To promote the implementation of Agenda 21 and other commitments of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including the outcomes of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the achievement of sustainable development world wide;

(b) To identify new issues to be brought to the attention of the Commission for its consideration, including the assessment of new critical areas of sustainability, for instance, consumption and production patterns as an umbrella concept encompassing environmental and economic factors. To that end, the subprogramme will continue to develop a comprehensive framework to integrate better the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Within that context a strong emphasis will be placed not only on the integration of relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21, but also on incorporating into that framework the results of other major United Nations conferences held in recent years;

(c) To monitor the implementation of sustainable development goals through the assessment of data collected at the national, regional and international levels, and to complete work (in cooperation with other United Nations and non-United Nations entities) on indicators of sustainable development and their application. The Secretariat will also continue to serve as a custodian of data provided by the Member States through national reports. Emphasis will be placed on facilitating the access of Governments and non-State actors to information, in electronic form, related to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(d) To strengthen coordinated approaches towards implementing sustainable development among the organizations of the United Nations system through the Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development, for which the Division provides the secretariat. In that capacity the Division will seek to (a) to integrate the concept of sustainable development into the work of all relevant United Nations organizations; and (b) to coordinate the monitoring of the implementation of various parts of Agenda 21 to which different bodies of the United Nations, including the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, have been assigned the functions of task managers;

(e) To promote a dialogue with and involvement of major groups in the work of the Commission and in sustainable development activities in general.